

Chief Richardville House  
(Jean Baptiste Richardville House)  
U.S. Route 24  
Huntington  
Huntington County  
Indiana

HABS No. IN-157

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IND.  
35-HUNT,  
1-

~~PHOTOGRAPHS~~

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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1-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHIEF RICHARDVILLE HOUSE  
(JEAN BAPTISTE RICHARDVILLE HOUSE)

HABS No. IN-157

Location: U.S. Route 24 (junction with U.S. 24 Bypass),  
Huntington, Huntington County, Indiana.

Longitude 85 29.6' W  
Latitude 40 53.0' N

Present Owner: Luke Sheer

Significance: The Chief Richardville House was the home of the chief of the Miami Indians, Pe-she-wah, Jean Baptiste Richardville, the nephew of Chief Little Turtle. At the time the house was built, the property was on the Miami Indian reservation, and served as the tribal headquarters from 1833 until the death of Richardville's successor, Chief Frances LaFontaine, in 1847.

### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1833.
2. Original and subsequent owners:
  - 1833 House built by Chief Richardville.
  - 1841 Death of Chief Richardville. His successor, Chief Frances LaFontaine, married Richardville's daughter and took title to the property.
  - 1847 Death of Chief LaFontaine. His daughter Archangel Ingleman (nee LaFontaine) took title to the property.
  - 1925 Death of Archangel Ingleman. Property to her heirs.
  - 1943 Purchase of property by Luke Sheer, Huntington newspaperman.
3. Alterations and additions: At an undetermined date, a rear leanto was added as a kitchen. In 1943, Luke Sheer purchased the house and installed indoor plumbing, put cement around the base of the house to deter rodents and other burrowing animals, restored the chimney to the front of the house, and removed and reversed the exterior siding.

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B Historical Context:

The Chief Richardville House was built in the summer of 1833 by the chief of the Miami Indians. In 1826, the Treaty of Paradise Springs guaranteed government provision of an Indian reservation of ten square miles and \$600.00 for the construction of houses for Indian chiefs. In exchange, the Indians sold the most of their land north of the Wabash. At that time the U.S. government agents presented an outline representing the type of house considered in the outlay of funds. These houses were essentially two-room structures with a loft above. In 1832-34, the city of Huntington was founded on the eastern border of Richardville's tract. At this time, another treaty was being negotiated with the Miami's, which fell through in the autumn of 1833, when Richardville learned that the government agents were attempting to purchase Miami reservation lands for one-fifth their value. Before the collapse of negotiations, Chief Richardville began construction on the house, enlarging the rear wing, which conformed to the two-room with upper loft prototype, by adding a two story main block. The house was located at the fork of the Wabash and Maumee rivers where the portage for the rivers terminated. The portage path was used in winter when the Little River, which connected the Maumee to the Wabash, was frozen, and in the summer when the water level in the Little River was too low for transport. The income derived from control of the portage path was substantial, and Richardville came to be known as the "Nabob of the Wabash". Chief Richardville's primary home was in Fort Wayne, Indiana, but the house in Huntington was used as the tribal headquarters of the Miami Indians until the death of his successor, Chief Frances LaFontaine.

For photocopies of photographs of the house see data pages 8 and 9.

Prepared by Eleni Silverman  
Historian, HABS, (4/11/84)  
From a paper by Ron Baker, Ken Gantz,  
Mark Swanson, and Ken Tilbury prepared  
at Ball State University in March of  
1971.

The following documentation was developed by students at Ball State University, under the direction of David R. Hermansen, Professor, in 1971. It was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey and was neither edited by nor supervised by members of the HABS staff.

PART. II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. GENERAL STATEMENT

1. Architectural Merit and Interest: The Chief Richardville dwelling was built in the summer of 1833 near Huntington, Indiana. It is a typical example of an offer made to Indians at this time by the government in exchange for some land. However, it is probably the only example in the area of a wood frame house built during that period.
2. Condition of Fabric: Fair to poor. Parts of the house are deteriorating with some structural members beginning to fail.

B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

1. Overall Dimensions: 55' x 42'
2. Number of Stories: The house is in two parts. The south wing is two stories with an attic. The north wing is one and a half stories with a basement beneath.
3. Layout, Shape: The shape is basically an "L" with one lean-to and two porches attached.
4. Foundations: These are of stone rubble and roughed faced. The original foundation has been somewhat added to since the house was built for preservation reasons.
5. Wall Construction, Finish and Color: The exterior walls of the south wing are of 6" wood stud construction; the north wing, 5" wood stud construction. The exterior is faced with horizontal clapboard siding painted white. This is the original siding of the house which was reversed in 1944 by its present owner. The small lean-to on the west side of the house has vertical exterior siding.
6. Structural System, Framing: The house is a wood framing system, wall bearing construction. Interior walls are stud framed on both levels. The first floor joists are 3" x 9" timbers, 21" o.c. and

supported from failure by metal posts added later in the basement. Ceiling height in the basement is 6'-3". The south wing has a ceiling height of 9'-10" on first floor, 8'-9" on the second floor. The north wing is 8'-9" ceiling height on first floor and 6'-11" to the peak on the second floor.

7. Porches, Stoops, Bulkheads, etc.: The house has two porches and one lean-to. A 10' x 30' open air porch is attached to the east side of the house. Construction is simple. Five square cut timber columns support a beveled roof projecting from the north wing. Another porch on the north side was supported by one column and butted into the lean-to on the west side for further support. It is much smaller in size, yet simple in construction. The lean-to on the west side has vertical wooden siding on three sides with a tin facade on the east. This tin is impressed with an imitation concrete block pattern.
8. Chimneys: Originally there were three chimneys. One being in the south wing, one in the north wing, and one in the lean-to. The rectangular chimney of the south wing still exists and is of red brick. It is simple with no cap on top. The square chimney of the lean-to is red brick on the bottom half with a clay tile stack on the top half. The missing chimney was in the north wing and went to the kitchen.
9. Doorways and Doors: There were originally exterior doors but one door leading to the porch from the south wing was blocked up. The exterior doors are all similar and simple. They are solid wood consisting of six recessed panels. The only significant doorway is that of the south entrance into the south wing. Here the simple panel door is flanked on each side by a glass sidelight broken into four equal segments with three mullions. Each sidelight is flanked by two square cut columns with stair-stepped capitals. They support a very simple wooden entablature. This entire doorway is then recessed into the exterior wall and then framed again by two larger square cut wooden columns with simple entablature on the exterior wall itself.
10. Windows and Shutters: The windows are wooden double hung. There appears to have been shutters on the windows at one time, but they no longer exist. The sills and jambs are a simple construction and painted white. In the south wing, mullions divide each sash of the window into six equal glass panels. The windows in the upper story of the north wing are equal in size to only one sash of the double hung windows which appear throughout the rest of the house.

11. Roof: The south and north wings of the house are covered by wooden shake gable roofs butting each other at a 90° angle. The two porches and the lean-to have shed roof and are covered with wooden shakes.

#### C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

1. Basement: The basement exists only under the north wing of the house. Its height is only 6'-3" with a dirt floor and open to the outside and inside by north stairways.

First Floor: Main entrance is from the south into the south wing. The entrance hall contains a stairway up to the second floor; and also opens to the living room to the west and, at one time, to the porch on the north. The living room opens on the north to the north wing and here is the dining room, and beyond that, the kitchen. Both dining room and kitchen have entrances onto the porch to the east.

Second Floor: From the entrance hall of the south wing there leads a stairway up to two bedrooms. North of these bedrooms and in the north wing are two more bedrooms for servants. These have entrance through a stairway on the north side of the north wing.

Attic: The only attic space is that in the south wing. There is no direct access to it from the second floor.

2. Stairways: There are four stairways in the house-- three wooden interior stairways and one cement exterior stairway. The stairways in the entrance hall is an open wooden stairway, very simple in construction style. Beneath it is a toilet installed during a later period. The newel post is somewhat massive, yet similar to the balusters in that it is very simple. The other two interior stairways are also wooden, yet narrower and not as formal as the entrance hall stairway. They are in the north wing; one leading up to the second floor and one leading down to the basement.
3. Flooring: The basement has a dirt floor. All other floors, those of the first floor and second floor, are wood planking. The rooms in the north wing on the first floor have linoleum covering the wood planking. There is also checkerboard linoleum or tile in the entrance hall.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The basement walls are exposed stone rubble foundation. Similarly the ceiling of the basement is exposed floor joist timbers. All of the interior rooms of the house are wood lathe and plaster covered. The living room in the south wing is painted with light green walls and a white ceiling. The master bedroom in the south wing on the second floor is covered with striped wallpaper, and the room next to it, which is above the entrance hall, is covered with flowered wallpaper. In the north wing, on the first floor, the dining room walls and ceiling are painted pink; the kitchen walls and ceiling painted white; and the lean-to walls and ceiling, pink. On the second floor of the north wing, the servants rooms are painted a light pink. The attic in the south wing is believed to be exposed timbers.
5. Doorways and Doors: All interior doors are solid wood with recessed panels. There are eight doors on the first floor and two on the second floor. The framing is handled in a simple manner.
6. Special Decorative Features: There are two significant fireplaces in the dwelling. Both are on the west wall of the south wing. One is in the living room on the first floor and the other in the master bedroom on the second floor. Both have rectangular openings, wooden framed in a simple style, and are painted white. There is an area on the floor in front of the fireplace in the master bedroom which is bricked, whereas in the living room fireplace, the wood plank floor is carried right up to the hearth.
7. Notable Hardware: Most of the doors seem to have porcelain door knobs. Cupboard door handles are metal. Metal flashing is used at the joint between the south wing and the north wing of the dwelling. Also it appears around the chimney of the south wing.
8. Mechanical Equipment: There is little equipment in the house. The only mentionable item is the cast iron plumbing which was placed in the house around 1943.

#### D. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. General Setting: The Richardville House is located in a rural area west of Huntington, Indiana. It lies north of the Little Wabash River and faces south. U.S. 24 bypass parallels the dwelling to the east and old 24 West bounds it on the south. There are several other residences adjacent to and west of the dwelling.

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2. Outbuildings: North of the dwelling, about 40 feet, is a 4'x4' wooden outhouse with a tin roof.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Secondary and Published Sources:

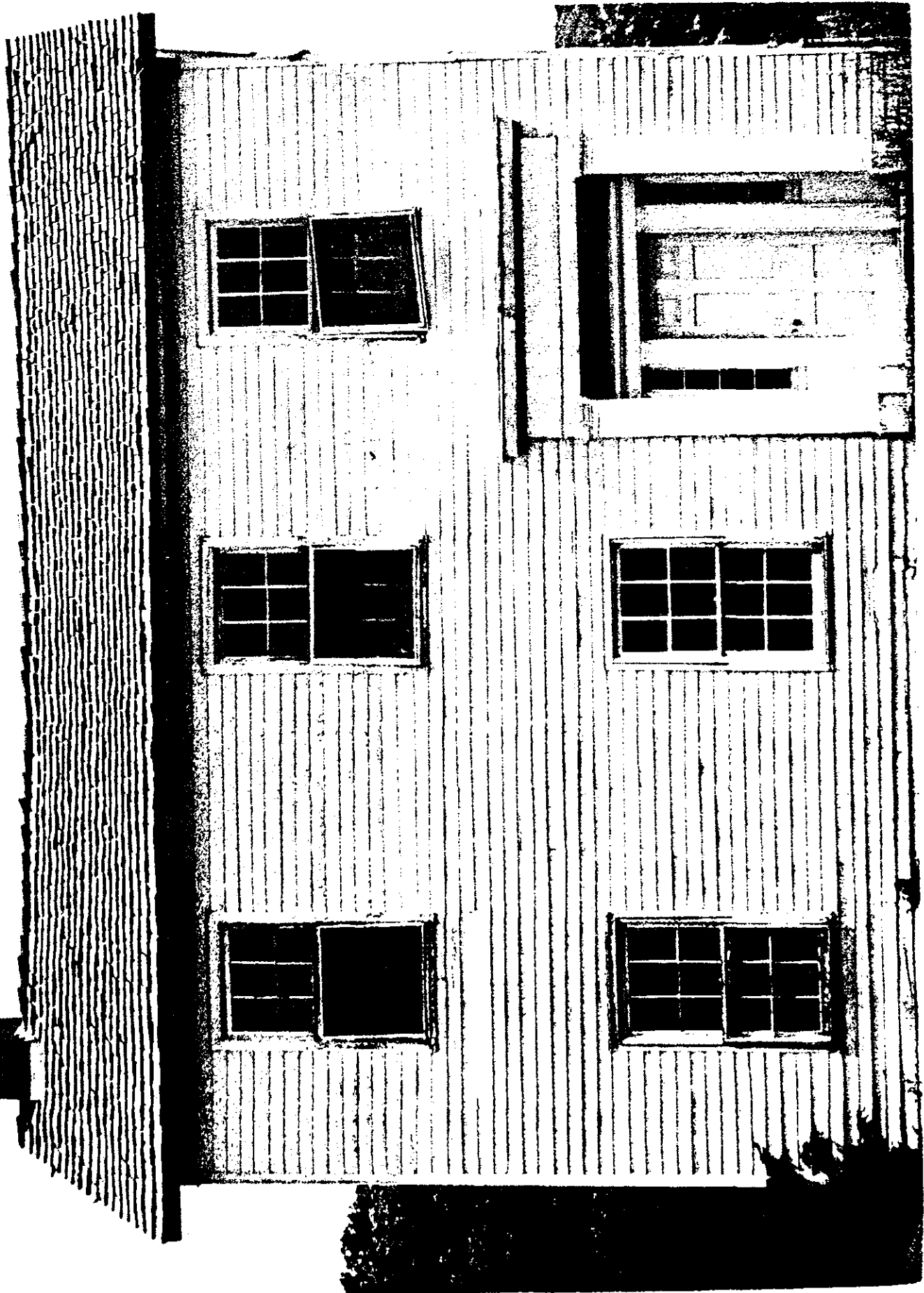
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CHIEF RICHARDVILLE HOUSE  
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See Field Records for originals



CHIEF RICHARDVILLE HOUSE  
HABS No. IN-157 (9)  
See Field Records for originals

